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Among the children in three of the larger schools a record of 100 per cent corrections of correctable physical defects has been made. In the fiscal year 1922, the third year of the work, special activities were begun for the promotion of infant and maternity hygiene, for adult life extension, and for tuberculosis control. At the two baby clinics established in the county over 250 babies were examined in the first month of that special activity. All the activities are performed under the direction of one person, the whole-time county health officer. The program furnishes a striking example of a maximum of work with a minimum of overhead expense.

Conclusion.

The plan of cooperative rural health work in which the Public Health Service has been engaged during the last several fiscal years has proved economical and effective and should be extended, without unnecessary delay, to meet, to a reasonably adequate degree, the serious need of well-balanced, whole-time local health service in the rural districts of the United States.

SICKNESS AMONG NEW YORK STATE FACTORY WORKERS IN 1919.

Abstract of Special Bulletin No. 108, of the New York State Department of Labor.¹

The average per capita loss of working time caused by sickness involving disability of three days to six months, in the State of New York, was 1.1 days for the last half of 1919, according to a report of the New York State Department of Labor on an investigation conducted by the Associated Industries of New York State (Inc.). For the six months the number of cases was 114.4 per thousand employed. The annual rates undoubtedly would be greater than double the figures given for the six months, the report states, since the prevalence of respiratory diseases and epidemics of the late winter and early spring would make the amount of sickness for the first half of the year greater than the amount for the last half. It is stated that for employees covered by this survey the annual per capita loss of time on account of sickness of three days' to six months' duration probably would be about two and one-third days, on the assumption that the amount of sickness was about 10 per cent greater the first half of the year.²

The chief reason for the difference between two and one-third days and the estimates commonly given of five to nine days of disability,

¹ From the Statistical Office, U. S. Public Health Service.

² This estimate of 10 per cent is based on the figures given in "Sickness and Absenteeism During 1919 in a Large Industrial Establishment," published by the United States Public Health Service (Reprint No. 611), which showed a 10 per cent higher loss of time in the first half of the year 1919 than in the second half.

according to the bulletin, is the fact that no disabilities of more than six months or under three days were included. Persons more or less permanently disabled through accident, disease, or advanced years no doubt did not appear on the time records and were consequently not reported among the disabled, since only persons actually employed at the time of the investigation were included in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain, not the total amount of sickness occurring, but the actual amount of time for which sickness benefits would be paid under a law providing for compensation beginning with the third day of disability on account of sickness and continuing for 26 weeks (six months) if disability should last that long. Accidents were not included, and loss of working time only was reported, Sundays and holidays not being counted as days lost.

A further reason given for the disparity between the results of this and other surveys of sickness is the fact that male employees constituted approximately three-fourths of the employees covered by the survey. In this investigation the sickness rate, both as to number of cases per thousand employed and as to average per capita loss of time, was more than 50 per cent greater for women than for men (101 cases of sickness per 1,000 male employees in six months, as compared with 154 cases per 1,000 female employees; and 0.9 working days loss for each male employee, as compared with 1.6 days loss for each female employee). Consequently, for an equal number of women and men, the combined rate would be more than 10 per cent greater than the combined rate resulting from this survey.

According to the original plan of the survey, each absence lasting three days or longer was to be investigated among 200,000 industrial employees in the State, from July 1 to December 31, 1919, but the elimination of incomplete and improperly kept records reduced the exposure to 76,559 employees in 143 different establishments. While the records were kept in most cases for the last six months of 1919, in some instances the work was not started until August, and in such cases the records were maintained through January, 1920.

The bulletin does not explain how the diagnosis of disease was obtained, and the extent to which the reported causes of disability could be relied on, but it does say that a few allied diseases—influenza and grippe, "colds" and bronchitis, and tonsillitis, and other diseases of the throat—made up 45 per cent of all cases of disability reported, and were responsible for 34 per cent, or over one-third, of the total loss of time caused by sickness. Measured by the loss of working time involved, diseases of the digestive system were of first importance among the different groups of diseases given in the International Classification, causing 25 per cent of the total lost time. Twenty-four per cent of the total loss of time was caused by respiratory diseases, and 22 per cent by general diseases.

Sickness of brief duration was, of course, of far less importance from the standpoint of loss of time and wages than from that of the number of cases. Sickness causing disability of from three to six days, which constituted 60 per cent of the total number of cases reported, involved only 26 per cent of the total time loss. More than half of the total loss of time and wages was caused by sickness lasting more than two weeks.

Information concerning insurance was reported for 7,080 out of the 8,761 persons who were absent for three days or more on account

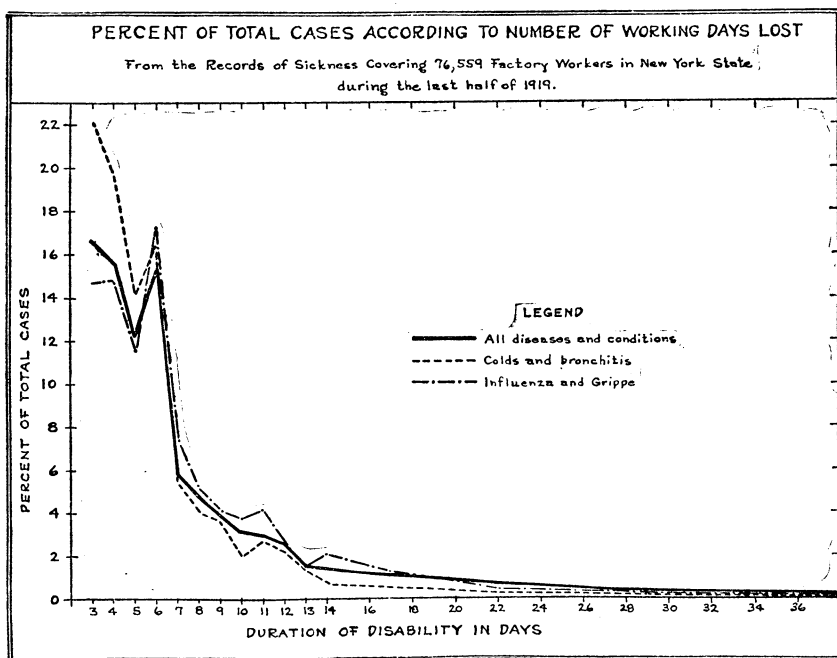


FIG. 1.

of sickness. Among the 7,080 persons, 4,610, or about 65 per cent, are known to have had no form of insurance against disease.

The frequency of cases causing different time losses is shown in the accompanying graph for colds and bronchitis and for influenza and grippe in comparison with all diseases. Attention is called to the large number of six-day cases. This is partly due to the fact that not only all cases of disability of seven calendar days but probably one-seventh of the eight calendar-day disabilities—those that included two Sundays—would also result in six days absence from work. Probably the chief reason, however, lies in the tendency to remain away from work an even week, some persons staying home a full week who are able to return a day earlier, while others return to work at the beginning of a new week who could well remain at home a day longer.